



Employers May Reduce Job Stress

According to the American Institute of Stress, job stress costs U.S. businesses more than \$300 billion annually due to increased absenteeism, employee turnover, diminished productivity and medical expenses

Once employers understand the negative health aspects associated with stress and the impact on their business, the best approach to reducing job stress is asking managers to lead by example. Managers should encourage and lead employees in stress relief activities, such as walking, healthy eating, laughing, and even meditating.

Sticking to a regular exercise program of brisk walking can boost a person's immune system. Even low levels of aerobic exercise, such as 30 minutes of brisk walking five days a week, can be effective.

Another helpful tip for employers to help reduce stress is to purposely schedule walking breaks during meetings. A 15-minute break to walk around the office is beneficial and helps reduce any stress that may have built up during the meeting.

An employee's frame of mind can also impact stress levels. Continual negative thoughts can increase stress for an employee, while maintaining a positive attitude can cut it. Complaining about traffic, a spouse, or a coworker can instantly increase stress levels. Instead, employees can easily cut stress by avoiding gossip and people who always complain.

Positive thinking has been shown to increase one's life span, lower rates of depression, improve coping skills during hardship, and even provide greater resistance to the common cold.

Here are five simple things employers can do to help keep stress levels down at their businesses:

1. **Have managers lead by example:** If a manager schedules a "walking meeting," employees may feel more encouraged to get out of the office on a regular basis and enjoy some fresh air. If managers are making an effort to be active or take a break throughout the day, their employees will feel less guilty about stepping away from their desks.
2. **Get to the office a little earlier:** This allows you time to organize and answer emails, grab a cup of coffee and check your voicemail before your work day officially starts.
3. **Create a space for quiet time or meditation:** Creating a specific place for quiet time or meditation provides employees a refuge from technology--a place where they can be alone with their thoughts and take a few minutes to re-group. Many people find that they are refreshed and reenergized after taking a meditation break.
4. **Encourage or create social activity/team building/laughter:** Employees spent a lot of time with their co-workers. The more they enjoy it, the happier the work place will be. Setting aside a half hour or an hour a week for employees to come together in a common area and play a game is a great morale booster for the entire office.
5. **Allow pets at the office:** Pets are stress relievers. Allowing pets in the office will encourage employees to take a few minutes to themselves to enjoy their pet (or someone else's!).

Source: American Psychological Association

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